

APPENDIX F

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

F.1 Who answers questions about an award?

Questions on technical matters prior to an award should be addressed to the NASA Program Officer listed in the original NRA. Questions on technical matters after an award are addressed to the Technical Monitor identified on the cover page of the award document. Questions about administrative and budgetary matters are addressed to the NASA Award (i.e., Grants or Contracting) Officer. The PI's organizational research/grants office will know this point of contact from the official award document. It is important for the PI to know the various points of contact, including his/her organization's research/grants office, the NASA Award Officer, the NASA Technical Monitor, and/or the NASA Program Officer. Note that the NASA Technical Monitor and Program Officer may be the same person.

F.2 Is all the information in this Guidebook needed to submit a proposal?

Starting with the formal publication of this Guidebook, most NRAs released by NASA will contain only information specific to the technical description of that one advertised program. The NRA will then refer prospective Proposers to this Guidebook for all common or "default" requirements, policies, procedures, and formats to be used for the preparation of proposals unless specifically exempted otherwise in the NRA. It is the intention of NASA to restrict exceptions to these standards to items that are unique to a given NRA.

F.3 Who is responsible for what?

The Principal Investigator is expected to provide scientific and technical leadership for the proposed research and the timely publication of results. The PI's organization has responsibility for general supervision of all award activities, especially for all fiduciary matters, and also for notifying NASA of any significant problems relating to financial or administrative matters, including issues of scientific misconduct and when the PI must be changed for some reason (ref. also F.9 below). NASA is responsible for the appropriate and timely review, selection, and funding of proposals submitted in response to the NRA and for monitoring the selected proposals during their periods of performance.

F.4 Who determines the type of award to be made?

NASA determines the appropriate funding instrument (a grant, a contract, or a cooperative agreement; an interagency transfer; or an intra-NASA funding instrument) for each award based on the nature of the program for which the competition was held and the type of proposing organization. Occasionally, an NRA will specify that only one type of award will be made based on its unique circumstances or requirements.

F.5 Who monitors an award?

An award is monitored by the NASA Technical Monitor or the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative, who serves as an official resource to the NASA Grants or Contracting Officer, respectively. This person is knowledgeable about the technical aspects of the award and provides scientific and technical advice, including reviews of progress reports, to the Award Officer. The Award Officer has the responsibility to ensure that the award is properly administered, including technical, cost, and schedule aspects.

F.6 Is it "my" award?

Although the PI usually originates and writes the proposal and has technical/scientific leadership of the work, NASA's funding awards are legally issued to the proposing organization at which the PI is employed and not to the PI personally. Although a PI may use the term "my grant" (or contract or cooperative agreement), the distinction between the PI and the legal grant recipient is real, and the PI should understand the various responsibilities for the administration of the award due to this distinction.

F.7 Must every proposal include certain documents?

Awards for financial assistance are subject to certain U.S. statutory and other general requirements, such as compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and other laws and regulations, e.g., prohibition of discrimination; prohibition of misconduct in science and engineering; requirements for a drug-free workplace; restrictions on lobbying; requirements for patents and copyrights; and the use of U.S.-flag carriers for international travel, whenever possible. For all NRAs submitted through the NASA's electronic proposal system, the signature on the *Proposal Cover Page* by the Authorizing Official of the proposing organization certifies that the organization is cognizant of and in compliance with all applicable certifications (for information purposes these certifications are given in Section E.1 of Appendix E). For all proposals submitted electronically through NSPIRES or Grants.gov, the electronic signature of the AOR who submits the proposal meets the certification requirements.

F.8 Once an award has been implemented, for what must prior approval be requested?

Prior approval requirements are set forth in the FAR, the NFS, and the *NASA Grant and Cooperative Agreement Handbook*. Several of the most common situations requiring prior written authorization from NASA are:

- transfer of the project to another organization at which the PI takes employment (ref. also F.9 below);
- a substantive change in objectives or scope of the project;
- a change in the designation of the PI, e.g., because of his/her change in employment status, retirement, or death;
- a substantial change in the PI's commitment of effort;
- new or revised allocations for purchase of major equipment;
- the intent to award a subcontract in excess of \$100,000 or to purchase equipment in excess of \$5,000 that was not part of the original budget; and/or
- actions involving a change of obligations (legally called a "novation").

The recipient organization requests approval for such actions from the NASA Award Officer, who often will ask for a recommendation from the cognizant Technical Monitor. However, only the NASA Award Officer can officially approve or deny such requests.

F.9 What happens if the PI changes organizations?

When a PI leaves his/her organization during the course of an award to that organization, that organization has the option of nominating an appropriately qualified replacement PI or recommending termination of the award. In the former case, NASA has the right of approval of the recommended replacement PI. If the replacement is approved, the award continues at the original organization through its nominal period of performance. However, if NASA judges that participation of the original PI is critical to the project owing to his/her unique knowledge and capabilities, then NASA will seek the agreement of both the PI's original and new organization to either transfer the award (novation) or to terminate the original award at the PI's original organization followed by implementation of a new award at the PI's new organization to complete the project.

F.10 Who owns any equipment purchased through the award?

Title to most equipment purchased or fabricated for the purpose of conducting research by an academic organization or other nonprofit organization using NASA funds normally vests with the recipient organization of the award. In some instances, NASA may elect to take title but, if so, the recipient will be notified of that intention when the award is approved by an Award Officer. Title to equipment acquired by a commercial organization using Federal funds provided through any type of award vests with the Government.

F.11 Can an award be suspended or terminated?

The award document will contain procedures that define conditions for suspension or termination of awards. For example, lack of adequate progress in meeting the objectives of the award or failure to submit required reports set forth in the award document on a timely basis may be grounds for termination of an award. Awards may also be terminated by mutual agreement between the recipient organization and NASA. In the event of a termination, the recipient is not entitled to expend any more funds except to the extent required to meet commitments that, in the judgment of NASA, had become firm before the effective date of the termination. A suspension of advance payments may also occur when a recipient demonstrates an unwillingness or inability to comply with financial reporting requirements. Where this occurs, the recipient would be required to finance its operations with its own funds, and NASA would reimburse the recipient's costs. Advance payments would be reinstated upon corrective action by the recipient organization. An award may also be terminated in cases of professional misconduct on the part of the PI.

F.12 Are there required reports?

The two types of technical reports generally required for grants are as follows.

- ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT -- For multiple year awards, NASA requires that a brief progress report be submitted to the Program Officer 60 days before

the anniversary date of the award, in order to allow for the timely recommendation for a continuation of funding.

- **SUMMARY OF RESEARCH** -- NASA requires a final summary of research report to be submitted to the NASA Awards Officer and the Technical Officer for every award at the completion of the period of performance. This report should include substantive results from the work, as well as references to all published materials from the work, and is due within 90 days after the end of the award.

Other reports, in addition to technical reports, are required that include financial, property, invention or other specialized reports applicable for certain types of grants (such as education grants). The award document will include a complete list of required reports and schedules for their submission. Especially significant is the Federal Cash Transaction Report (SF 272) that is due at the end of each Federal fiscal quarter from the organization holding the award.

If the resulting award is a contract, reporting requirements will be detailed in the award.

F.13 What is NASA's policy about releasing data and results derived through its sponsored research awards?

All data taken through research programs sponsored by NASA are considered public. As a Federal Agency, NASA requires prompt public disclosure of the results of its sponsored research and, therefore, expects significant findings from supported research to be promptly submitted for peer reviewed publication with authorship(s) that accurately reflects the contributions of those involved. Likewise, as a general policy and unless otherwise specified, NASA no longer recognizes a "proprietary" period for exclusive use of any new scientific data that may be acquired through the execution of the award; instead, all data collected through any of its funded programs are to be placed in the public domain at the earliest possible time following their validation and calibration. However, small amounts of data (for example, as might be taken during the course of a suborbital (rocket or balloon), Space Shuttle, or Space Station investigation) are usually left in the care of the Principal Investigator. In any case, NASA may require that any data obtained through an award be deposited in an appropriate public data archive as soon as possible after calibration and reduction. If so, NASA will negotiate with the organization for appropriate transfer of the data and, as necessary, may provide funds to convert the data into an easily used format using standard units.

Note: There are cases when data cannot be disclosed in the public domain (e.g., export controlled data). Even in these cases, Proposers are expected to publish data to the greatest extent possible (e.g., use normalized data or at least discuss new methodologies used with clean "test cases.")

F.14 How is NASA to be acknowledged in publications?

All publications (including websites or other electronic only products) of any material based on or developed under NASA sponsored projects should conclude or begin with the following acknowledgement:

"This material is based upon work supported by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration under Grant/Contract/Agreement No. <xxxxxx> issued through the <XYZ> Mission Directorate <or ABC Program, as appropriate>."

Except for articles or papers published in peer-reviewed scientific, technical, or professional journals, the exposition of results from NASA supported research should also include the following disclaimer:

"Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this article <or report, material, etc.> are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration."

Finally, as a courtesy, any releases of NASA photographic or illustrative data products should list NASA first on the credit line followed by the name of the PI institution, for example,

"Photograph <or illustration, figure, etc.> courtesy of NASA <or NASA Center managing the mission or program> and the <Principal Investigator institution>."

F.15 Can audits occur, and are they important?

Yes, Government auditors frequently check contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements for evidence of fraud, waste, and/or mismanagement by the recipient organization. Therefore, it is important to keep clear and accurate records to avoid misunderstandings.

F.16 What are the uses of a No Cost Extension?

A no cost time extension to an award allows the completion of the objectives for which the proposal was selected that have not been accomplished in the originally specified period of performance owing to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., the inability to hire a critically important graduate student or postdoctoral employee in time; the breakdown of a unique and critical piece of equipment; or the inability to coordinate important activities with Co-Is through circumstances beyond the control of the PI). A no cost time extension may not be implemented merely to use funds that are unspent because of the untimely planning of activities within the original period of performance. For a one-time extension of a grant or a cooperative agreement with a noncommercial firm, the recipient must notify NASA in writing with the supporting reasons and revised expiration date (not to exceed twelve months) before the expiration date specified in the award. For cooperative agreements with commercial firms, the parties may extend the expiration date if additional time is required to complete the milestones at no increase in Government resources. Requests for approval for no cost time extensions must be forwarded to the NASA Agreement Officer no later than ten days prior to the expiration of the award to be considered. For a contract, an appropriate request must be submitted for NASA's approval by the recipient organization. Ref. further details on No Cost Time Extensions in Section D.3 of Appendix D and Provisions Section 1260.23, and 1274.909 of the *Grants and Cooperative Agreements Handbook* (ref. Appendix A for Web site).

F.17 Why are all these requirements and details about research awards necessary?

Funding for research using U.S. Federal monetary resources is a privilege accorded to U.S. organizations by NASA acting on behalf of the U.S. Congress and the public at large. The recipient is legally obligated to use the funds appropriately and conscientiously to justify their continued appropriation through the Federal budget. This obligation necessarily entails attention to the details of how the award is competed and selected, and then how the selected activities are carried out, in order to provide public accountability of the Nation's financial resources throughout the process.

F.18 Why aren't all proposals that are highly rated by peer review selected for funding?

Although a proposal in response to an NRA may nominally be judged by peer review to be of intrinsically high merit, it still may not be selected owing to the programmatic issues of relevance to NASA's stated interests and/or to budget limitations (ref. also Section C.2 of Appendix C). Regarding this latter factor, most of NASA's NRAs are oversubscribed by factors ranging typically from two to five or even higher. The entirety of the factors leading to a decision of selection or nonselection will be conveyed to the Proposers during the course of a debriefing after selections are announced (ref. Section C.6 of Appendix C).

F.19 Are proposals from NASA Centers subject to peer review, and are their budgets based on Full Cost Accounting?

All proposals submitted in response to an NRA are subjected to exactly the same peer review process regardless of the submitting organization, including NASA Centers. NASA is now operating using full cost budgeting, accounting, and management practices. As such, all research proposals should be submitted with fully loaded costs for all cost items that will be funded with the requested award, including procurement, civil service labor, travel, etc. Overhead, such as service pools, center G&A, and corporate G&A, should be included to the extent that it will be funded through the requested award. NASA researchers answering NRAs should comply with the current implementation of simplified full cost accounting for the requested year of performance. Non-NASA researchers answering NRAs should work with the NASA sponsoring organization to ensure all direct costs (including NASA facilities and civil service labor) are adequately accounted for. The web address for NASA's Full Cost Initiative is: <http://www.hq.nasa.gov/fullcost>.

F.20 Why is an award sometimes slow in being implemented after selection?

NASA is committed to the goal of initiating awards within 46 days after the selections are announced to the Proposers. However, sometimes additional materials are needed from the Proposer (e.g., revised budgets and/or budget details) before NASA may legally obligate Federal money. Contracts and cooperative agreements with for profit entities generally take longer owing to greater complexity. Finally, NASA's ability to distribute funds is dependent on the timely approval of its budget through the Federal budget process, which occasionally may be delayed; such a delay can significantly affect the implementation of awards, especially those whose nominal start dates would fall in the first quarter of the Fiscal Year (October through December).

F.21 Who may be listed as participating personnel on a proposal?

Every person who has agreed in writing (ref. Section 2.3.9) to perform a significant role in a proposed effort, even if at no cost, is entitled to be listed as a Co-I (ref. also Section 1.4.2). However, since one of the nominal requirements for the Science/Technical/Management Section of a proposal is the justification of each key member of a proposal's team (ref. Section 2.3.5), Proposers are reminded that the stated contributions and qualifications of proposal personnel will be evaluated as part of the peer review process. Inclusion of unjustified personnel can lead to a downgrading of a proposal's rating.

F.22 How does the NASA Research Announcement (NRA) differ from other types of NASA research solicitations?

NASA commonly issues three types of solicitations for scientific and technical research that are broadly defined as follows:

- NASA Research Announcement (NRA) – A NRA is used to solicit and competitively select relatively nonspecific research, technology, and/or education projects and investigations to be funded through NASA's ongoing Research and Analysis budgets. Awards made through NRAs are typically for three years although some awards can be for as long as five years. NRA awards are most commonly in the form of grants but at NASA's discretion, and depending on the type of the proposing organization, may be a contract or a cooperative agreement.
- Announcement of Opportunity (AO) – An AO is used to competitively select relatively well-defined science investigations for a specific research opportunity funded by a specific element in NASA's budget, most commonly a NASA space mission (or program of missions such as the Explorer missions) that may, but does not always, involve the provision and operation of experimental hardware. Science investigations carried out through an AO almost always involve a considerable degree of oversight by NASA to ensure adherence to cost and schedule requirements and are almost always funded through a contract since well-defined "deliverables" are involved. Contracts awarded through an AO can be for hundreds of millions of dollars and may have periods of performance lasting ten years or more for space flight missions.
- Cooperative Agreement Notice (CAN) – A CAN is used to solicit unique research programs and/or related activities that involves a relatively high degree of interaction and cooperation between NASA and the selected recipient(s) to achieve NASA's desired objectives (e.g., to develop and operate a research institute, an extensive educational/public outreach activity, or a specified technology capability). Funding through a CAN is always done through a cooperative agreement award and can be for amounts up to several millions of dollars and for time periods as long as five years.

Most NRAs issued by NASA will rely upon this Guidebook to specify the organization and submission of proposals. However, because of their highly unique characteristics, AOs and CANs will usually include their own specific instructions concerning the format and content of proposals, although frequently the instructions for a proposal's *Proposal Cover Page* may be identical to that given in this Guidebook due to the use of the common proposal database system by NASA Headquarters that is accessed at <http://nspires.nasaprs.com/>.

F.23 What is NASA's policy for submitting late proposals?

Proposals or proposal modifications received after the latest date specified for receipt may be considered if a significant reduction in cost to the Government is probable or if there are significant technical advantages, as compared with proposals previously received.

F.24 Why doesn't NASA release the names of the reviewers who reviewed my proposal?

NASA solicits the most knowledgeable, non-conflicted peers available to review the proposals it receives. It is NASA's opinion, which is generally substantiated by the opinions of the reviewers it has used, that preserving the anonymity of the participants in the review process promotes more candid comments than if this practice were not used. During the conduct of a panel a NASA Program Officer is present to ensure that the discussions and written text on the review forms remain focused on the technical qualities of the proposals being discussed. The review comments on the Summary Evaluation Form, which reflect the considered opinion of the entire panel and not those of any one reviewer, are preserved for the record.

F.25 I can't find the application forms in Grants.gov for the specific solicitation that I want to propose to; where are they?

Each NRA can be found by searching on the NRA title. All NASA application packages may be found by searching on CFDA Number 00.000. For omnibus NRAs (e.g. ROSES, ROA), each program element requires a different application package and has a different Funding Opportunity Number; the Funding Opportunity Number may be found in each appendix of the omnibus NRA. Enter the appropriate Funding Opportunity Number to retrieve the desired application package.

F.26 How can a PI verify that his/her proposal has been properly submitted?

It is the Offeror's responsibility to ensure the successful submission of a proposal and to ensure that all required parts of the proposal, as described in the solicitation, are incorporated.

NSPIRES automatically assigns a unique proposal number to each proposal only after it has been successfully submitted. NASA uses this NSPIRES number throughout the proposal review and selection process to uniquely identify the proposal and its associated electronic data. *If no NSPIRES number appears on the Proposal Cover Page, then it has not been submitted finally and correctly through the NSPIRES system.*

Proposers can also verify that their proposals have been submitted by logging into NSPIRES, and verifying that the proposal record now appears in the "Submitted Proposals" (versus "Active Proposals") part of their accounts.

As a courtesy, the PI and AOR will both receive an email from the NSPIRES system indicating that a proposal has been successfully submitted. This email is sent within moments of submission and should thus be received very quickly after the submission

activity. Proposers not receiving such an email should contact the NSPIRES Help Desk at nspires-help@nasaprs.com or on (202) 479-9376.

NOTE: Proposals submitted to Grants.gov will be transferred to NSPIRES for evaluation purposes. When this transfer is complete (possibly a few days after submission), Proposers will receive an email as described above and will be able to find the proposal record within the appropriate part of their NSPIRES account.